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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 05085

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ACTION: PAO
INFO: ECON POL AMB DCM

DISSEMINATION: PAO
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: PAO:WWROBERTSON
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 005085

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/RA; INR/R/MR; PA; INR/NESA;
INR/B; IIP/G/NEA-SA
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE; NSC
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: GCC SUMMIT/IRAQ ELECTIONS

11. Summary: "Al-Bayan" explains that previous GCC summits did not have so many issues on the table. English daily "Gulf News" calls on the GCC to take significant steps to increase cooperation in the region. A Kuwaiti editorialist in "Al-Ittihad" cites elections in Iraq as a good example of democracy for the region. End Summary.

12. Dubai-based business-oriented Arabic daily "Al-Bayan" (circulation 90,000) editorialized:

"The topics under discussion in the current summit have never been gathered in one summit before. These include social, economic and political issues, some of which have been delayed for decades.. It is high time for the GCC leaders to activate existing economic cooperation. However, these issues are the easiest to address compared with more sensitive issues such as security and military matters. These issues also effect GCC neighbors such as Iraq and include: mounting tension between Lebanon and Syria, the war against terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in the region. In previous summits socio-economic issues were a priority, followed by political issues. However in this summit, security and military issues are working their way to the top of the agenda, making this meeting a summit of challenges."

13. An unsigned editorial under the headline "There's a will, but

the way is missing", Dubai-based English daily "Gulf News," (circulation 95,000) states:

"Compared with the dormant Arab League, the GCC is an active regional player that looks after the interests of its six member states. On the other hand, After 25 years, Gulf citizens feel that little has been done. Deadlines for various integration projects are postponed, sporadic rows between some of the members hinder the implementation of approved plans and relevant bureaucracies in each state make it impossible to draw a unified policy on such vital issues as labor, health care and expatriate residence permits."

"Politically, member states have different, and sometimes conflicting, positions with regard to Iraq, Iran, ties with the United States and even the Palestinian question. The GCC has the political will and the resources to fulfill our ambitions. The people believe in it. They want it to succeed. But its progress has been curiously slow."

"The 26th GCC Summit, which concludes today, is being held at a critical time, regionally and internationally. Therefore, it should be more than the usual protocol gathering. The people of the Gulf await decisions to speed up the integration process and secure the stability of this region."

¶4. Mohammad Abdullah Al Mutawa wrote under the headline "Reformation of the GCC", Dubai-based English daily "Gulf News," (circulation 95,000):

"Anyone, who is following the concerns of GCC citizens, might notice that the main focus is on economic issues. This, in turn, will cement relations based on joint interests between countries and explore various avenues of economic cooperation, as well as enhance exchange of expertise and work force."

"The experiment of European countries showed clearly the importance of focusing on the economy first, then politics. This is why it is so important to focus on setting up a common market and create mechanisms of economic integration. GCC countries must give such issues top priority. Creating a unified currency and initiating new joint venture projects are also necessities to all GCC countries, so that they can exchange workforce and expertise."

"Regarding political issues, activating the role of national councils or any other political bodies and tools of political action, has become an urgent demand from all GCC people. The participation of woman in all institutions affiliated with the National Council has become necessary at this stage as a step towards full reformation."

"THE FINAL QUESTION IS THE POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING THE CONSULTATIVE AUTHORITY OF THE GCC, WHICH WAS SET UP DURING THE 17TH SUMMIT HELD IN DOHA IN 1996. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THIS AUTHORITY, WHOSE ROLE IS YET TO BE KNOWN? IT IS NECESSARY TO ACTIVATE THE ROLE OF THIS AUTHORITY AND ALLOW WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN ITS INSTITUTIONS."

¶5. Dr. Shamlan Al Eissa, a Kuwaiti editorialist wrote under the headline "The Iraqi Elections" on Abu Dhabi-based Arabic daily "Al Ittihad," (circulation 65,000):

"THE WORLD SEEMS TO BE INTERESTED IN KEEPING ABREAST OF THE RECENT IRAQI ELECTIONS BECAUSE OF THE ARAB SUNNI'S INVOLVEMENT. INITIALLY, THE ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM ULAMA BOYCOTTED LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS HELD LAST JANUARY. THIS CONTRIBUTED TO THE REDUCED REPRESENTATION OF SUNNIS IN THE PARLIAMENT. NOW WITH THEIR PARTICIPATION, THEY STAND A BETTER CHANCE TO REPRESENT THEMSELVES AND ABLE TO PLAY AN INCREASED ROLE IN THE NEXT STAGE OF THE PROCESS."

"The announcement of Al-Sistani restraining himself from supporting any election list comes as a courageous step towards eliminating religious men from effecting the political process. We hope that the Islamic political parties in the Arab countries and especially in the Gulf states take this as an example for their future participation."

"Iraqi citizens feel optimistic as they realize that this is the right path towards a better life. Despite all the obstacles in its way, neither boycott nor terrorism can stop democracy from prevailing in Arabia. Iraqis now are proving the fact that democracy, pluralism and freedom are possible in our region."

